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The elf, Lyu, looked down at the palm of her hand.

She was standing inside the bar, The Benevolent Mistress. She was a member of the staff that lived and worked there. All of them were busy preparing for the day early in the morning.

Many cat neonle were busy opening windows and cleaning

"Thus, van people, water oasy opening windows and ceaning around her, but Lyu was frozen in place.
"Lyu, something wrong, meow? You've been spaced out since yesterday...Feeling sick, meow?"
"No, my anologies...I'm fine."

The cat person, Ahnya, stopped to talk to Lyu while carrying a table in her arms.

Even while speaking to the girl with a long tail swishing at her feet, Lyu didn't take her eyes off her hand. This hand was held

Memories of an incident in the early evening last night swelled within her chest.

An item belonging to an acquaintance had been stolen—when she recovered the knife from a prum and returned it to Bell, he

grabbed her hand while showing his gratitude. And Lyu didn't reject it.

Memories of the past becam to hubble un inside as her expression

Memories of the past began to bubble up inside as her expression softened. Lyu was once an adventurer.

She belonged to a Familia and spent each day in Orario surrounded by allies

"Seriously, annihilating five adventurers at once...It was their fault for provoking you, but you went too far, Leon!"

"My apologies, Alize,"

They were sitting on the roof of a building. On this day, Lyu was brought up there to receive a lecture from one of her allies-one

that was fond of high places-in her Familia. Elves, beautiful and proud, had a complex where they wouldn't allow someone they didn't approve of to touch their skin. While

it wasn't true for all elves, that was how Lvu had been raised to think, and it occasionally got her into trouble. "Lvu' is such a pain to say!" Her ally had once said with a teasing grin on her face. She began referring to the elf as "Leon"

ever since. "Well, I thought your hunch was pretty good. After all, I refuse

to get my own pretty hands dirty." The human girl reached out to grab Lyu's hand and brought it up

to shoulder height. Lyu had a habit of physically knocking away the hands of anyone who tried to touch her. It was a sure bet that she would react like

that if a stranger tried it. The only exception was the girl sitting before her. Lyu didn't push her away. She had grabbed her hand the day they met and led Lyu back to

the Familia with a smile on her face.

Lyu recognized the girl's pure spirit and lightheartedness before her instincts told her to retaliate

"Indeed...you are beautiful. Always facing forward, you are nice enough to interact with anyone without discrimination. I have a

very deep respect for you."

Lyu made this statement with the utmost sincerity, but the girl only blinked a few times before blushing. Her rosy cheeks flushed to match the color of her gorgeous red

hair.

"Saying such embarrassing things with a straight face...This is why I have a weak spot for you serious elves..."

Whispering under her breath and tilting her head slightly to the

side, the girl tried to mask her shyness and practically shouted,
"Are you listening, Leoe?!"
"Remember this well! If a man ever holds your hand, no matter
how nely his face or weak his body is, you have to keen him!

Because a guy you'll truly accept is impossible to find! Rare monsters will be easier to spot, for sure!"

The girl's fingers were just in front of Lyu's face. Now it was ber

turn to blush.
"Must I?"

"You must!"

Lyu took her ally's declaration to heart and carved it into her memory.

The two of them looked out over the city of Orario, a clear blue

sky over their heads.

Lyu emerged from her precious memories of days gone by and returned to the present.

She thought about Bell as she looked at her own thin, white hand.

White hair and ruby red eyes, he was still a young boy and couldn't be relied on for much of anything. However, she sensed a spirit as pure as his white hair through the few conversations they

Shared.

Could this white-haired boy with the worry-free smile be the

fated partner that her ally had spoke of back then?

But, this boy was...

Lyu got back to work with her former ally's words ringing in her ears. That is until she happened to see something out the window. Her coworker, Syr, was giving a lunch to the boy, Bell.

Her coworker had been giving the boy a lunch to take with him into the Dungeon every morning for a while now.

Syr's pink checks were glowing with happiness, but Bell seemed embarrassed as be took the lunch from her bands and smiled back at her.

"... Alize, I am unable to do this."

Lyu smiled as she watched the two humans outside.

Not only was Syr her coworker—she was also her savior. There was no way she could even attempt to steal someone away from her.

Her former ally's name on ber lips, Lyu took quick steps to leave the area.

 $\mathbf{x}$ 

Early morning, a few days later.

Lyu was in the kitchen making a lunch.

—Syr was pathetic when she overslept.

"Delay Bell as long as you can!" she had said in a panicked voice
running up to her, but it was pointless. Lyu knew that Syr's trialand-error method of making the boy's lunch took at least an hour.

Feeling that it was her duty to cover for her coworker's mistake, Lyu went to the kitchen to make the lunch herself before greeting Bell in front of the her.

"Ah...Lyu?"

"Mr. Cranell, Syr is currently busy with preparations...She asked me to deliver this to you," she said as she handed the boy a small basket with the lunch inside. Bell was on his way to the Dungeon and accepted the basket without much thought—until a strange

smell wafted up from within, making his face souirm.

...Must have overdone it in my haste.

Lyu had made a sandwich. She put vegetables and meat, along with a raw egg, between two wildly sliced pieces of bread and toasted the whole thing. Everything was burnt, bread and every other incredient.

While she bad experience making jerky and other dried foods during her time as an adventurer, when it came to making fresh food, Lyu's skills were horribly lacking. Dann it, she swore to berself as she desperately tried to come up

with an explanation to give to the boy standing in front of her with a forced smile on his face.

"M-Mr. Cranell, Syr was not the one to make this...n-no, she

hasn't been feeling well today..."

Bell watched as the normally succinct Lyu struggled to speak.

He took a burnt lump of sandwich out of the basket. Lyu's eyes

opened wide as the boy took a big bite out of it.
"...T-today's seasoning, it's rather unique..."

Lyu's spine straightened as stiff as a board as she watched the boy take another bite, black flakes sticking to his chin. She opened her mouth to speak, but no sound came out.

In the end, all she could muster was a shy smile.

"Thank you for taking the time to prepare this for me. It was delicious...please tell Syr for me."

More than likely, Bell knew.

He knew that Syr didn't make the sandwich, that it was Lyu.

So, his words of gratitude were intended for her, the one standing in front of him.

-You have to keep him! Her ally's words echoed from the back of her mind.

Lyu hid the smile that was about to bloom on her face by tilting her bead down.

"Yes...I will tell ber"

Bell went down the street with the basket, carrying the rest of his lunch clutched in his hands. Lyu watched him go, narrowing her eyes as he disappeared into the crowd.

"This is a problem...I'm a little happy."

Lyu went back inside the bar with a smile on her lips. From that day forward, she watched the boy from afar as she

From that day forward, she watched the boy fro supported her coworker's endeavors.

## TRANSLATION NOTES

no honorific. Indicates familianty or closeness: if used without permission or

mason, addressing someone in this manner would constitute an insult. san The Japanese equivalent of Mr./Mrs./Miss, If a situation calls for politeness. this is the fallsafe honorific -shr: Not unlike -san; the equivalent of Mr/Mzs /Mss but conveying a more official -same: Conveys great respect: may also indicate that the social status of the

speaker is lower than that of the addressee. kur: Used most often when referring to boys, this indicates affection or familiarity. Occasionally used by older men among their peers, but it may also be -chan. An affectionate hoppelfic indicating familiarity used mostly in reference to girls; also used in reference to cute persons or animals of either gender.

Prum: One of the races of demi-humans that inhabit the city of Orario, whose

faina: A god's blessing on the adventurers in their Familia, a Faina is tattooed on the back of every member and. like a character sheet in an RPG, is a record of experience and abilities accrued by the adventurer while in the Dungeon.

Tenkni: I sterally "the heavenly world" this refers to the heavens....the realm from



## IS IT WRONG TO TRY TO PICK UP GIRLS IN A DUNGEON?

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